BECOMING AWARE AS A PARENT, SCHOOLTEACHER,

AND A COMMUNITY MEMBER

By

Anna Angaiak-Bond

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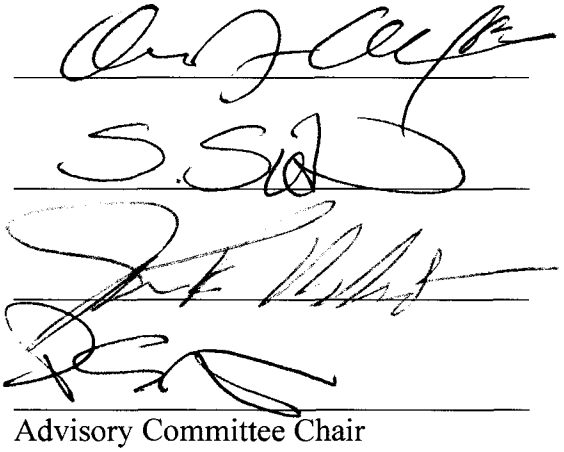

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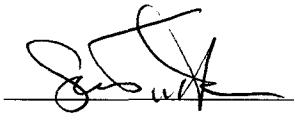

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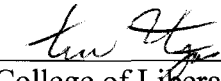

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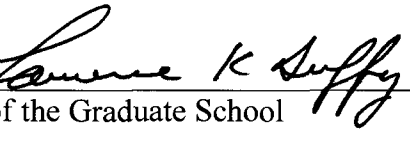

Dean of the Graduate School

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Becoming Aware as a Parent, Schoolteacher and Community Member

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

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Abstract

The researcher uses autoethnography to understand whether a parent can act to maintain and reinvigorate Yup'ik at home after the child has already become English dominant.

The research takes place in the village of Tununak, where the mother/researcher, a fluent Yup'ik speaker, lives with her son. The Tununak school has a Yup'ik First Language Program (YFL). Under this program, the first three years of school are taught in Yup'ik, their children's first language. The fourth year is a transition period in which English is introduced. After exiting the YFL program, English becomes the primary language of instruction. Eventually, the majority of the students become English dominant.

The researcher's child attended the YFL program and is now 15 years old. At the beginning of this research he spoke Yup'ik minimally. English was his dominant language. He was considered Limited English Proficient when he entered school. He has been designated as fully English proficient since 6th grade. His Yup'ik proficiency improved during the course of the research as he began to speak more phrases/sentences than he did at the beginning.

The researcher seeks to learn if her role as a parent can reinvigorate her child's first language, Yup'ik, after he has already become English dominant.

The research provided insights into one parent's attempts to strengthen the usage of Yup'ik at home. Data analysis focused on identifying factors that facilitated and/or hindered the process of speaking Yup'ik dominantly at home.

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This thesis would not have been possible without the financial support of the Second Language Acquisition and Teacher Education Project at the University of Alaska Fairbanks funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Alaska Native Education Program. I would also like to thank my school district Lower Kuskokwim School District, as well as UAF's Alaska Native Language Center, Applied Linguistics Program and Kuskokwim College for their financial and logistical support.

Foremost, my utmost gratefulness to my child who has taught me an important lesson on the significance of safeguarding our Yup'ik. Because of him, I have become aware of the sacredness of our Yup'ik, the uniqueness of our Yup'ik, and the beauty of our Yup'ik. Without him, I would not have gained insights as I have during my research.

Secondly, to my mom, who has encouraged her grandson to continue what she has used all her life, Yup'ik. Because of it, they have a special connection only they can feel. She has been a role model for me as to how I should be as a mom to my child. Her Yup'ik I wish to be reflected upon me, so I can reflect back to my child.

Chapter 1: Introduction

One winter evening in 2004, I was sitting on my comfortable recliner watching some long-forgotten TV show. My son was lounging on the not-so-brand-new sofa, reading a book, or doing some reading assignment. We were doing our own thing, but we were home together. We were at peace. It's a time when our home is our whole world. I heard a slight sound from my son, an indication that he wanted my attention. I looked at him. Then he asked me in his inquisitive, innocent way,

"Mom, how would you feel if you were the last speaker of your language?"

Fast forward to summer of 2007...How would I feel?

Becoming Aware: It Begins

In summer 2007, I started the University of Alaska Fairbanks' (UAF) Second Language Acquisition Teacher Educations (SLATE) program. It was that summer I became aware that I have neglected one responsibility: teach my son to speak our ancestral language, Yup'ik. As a parent, I have made sure my child was well fed, has clean clothes, gets to school on time, does well academically, and that he is becoming a responsible individual. It was the beginning of my self-discovery when I realized I could be helping my child to become the last speaker of his language. I have experienced the beginnings of a feeling of loss; grief for something that is not alive yet

essential to my being. My child even used "your language", like Yup'ik wasn't his in the first place. Maybe it's because I have not shared it with him. Time was no longer a luxury, but something to use well to salvage as much of my dwindling language *now* with *my child.*

Becoming aware, *ellangluni*, can be defined as gaining an enlightened understanding of why and how things are or are not. To become aware is to have an "ah-ha!" moment to make a connection and see things in a new way. These moments allow individuals to make positive changes in their lives to become better people. In my case, I was becoming aware as a parent, schoolteacher, and a community member.

For me, becoming aware was a gradual process that only kept heightening with the literature I read and what I heard about language loss, language shift, language maintenance, language revitalization and most disturbing of all, language extinction. Most of what I read and heard had an aura of gloom and doom. The term "moribund" kept popping up. I looked up its definition from a dictionary-"dying, coming to an end..."

I was taken aback by all this; there was too much truth involved here. Call it a rude awakening if you will. I live in Tununak, a community where Yupik is still spoken (although not as strongly as it once was). How can a language that is still spoken throughout the community be "dying"? There is no way that it's "dying". How can it be endangered? Who says it is? I became acutely aware of having a "first language" and "second language". The realization that Yup'ik was one of the "endangered" languages according to linguists like Dr. Michael Krauss ("UAF's

Krauss Awarded $1.2 Million to Document Endangered Languages," 2008) and English the dominant language has new meaning for me.

I became greatly annoyed at times at the realization that my Yup'ik language was on the decline. I understood what Dementi-Leonard & Gilmore (1999) meant when they said:

> Having outside experts determine the level or stage of success of these efforts or label the languages as *dying* and *moribund* can undermine the very notion of local control, local meaning, and certainly local hope (p. 39).

Yet I was curious to understand more about second language acquisition. Ever since I took the class, Linguistics 602: Second Language Acquisition, I've begun to wonder how *did* I acquire English, and yet still speak Yup'ik fluently today? The reading material on theories of Second Language Acquisition got me thinking about myself.

I acquired my second language, English, when I first entered school in the mid-60s at Tununak BIA school. Quite frankly, I don't recall how I learned it. I am highly proficient both in oral and written English. Some non-native people I meet are impressed that I speak English well. Ever since starting school, I have been fully self-conscious of being "Alaskan Native". I am acutely aware of how I speak and write in English. All my life, I have heard stories of students being punished for speaking their own indigenous language. To this day, I try to speak English the "right way". I did not want to feel inferior, because that is the most degrading emotion to experience.

What about my son? My son's first language, *my* language, was at stake, because English had become dominant for him. Saying I can speak Yupik should make me feel proud, but now there is a sense of guilt. I have a child who doesn't speak it fluently. In reflecting about my own childhood where Yupik was the *only* language spoken at home, I seriously had to ask why it wasn't in *my* own home. With my awareness, I obtained a newfound determination to reteach my child to speak Yupik. The question was *how?*

One article I read, Xiaoxia Li's (1991) "How Can Language Minority Parents Help Their Children Become Bilingual in Familial Context? A Case Study of a Language Minority Mother," had a profound effect on me. It was about the author and her daughter who moved from China to Hawaii.

Li (1991) was able help to her daughter learn both Chinese and English, without sacrificing either. Li was persistent and consistent in her efforts to take an active role in her daughter's maintaining Chinese while acquiring English. She told her daughter about Chinese culture, sang songs, visited their friends, read books, and occasionally used a Chinese dictionary. When her daughter was learning English grammar, code switching was used only to help her understand the English usage. I was touched and empowered by her story; I wanted to emulate her.

The essence of Li's (1991) success (at least to me) was her commitment to having a positive attitude towards both Chinese and English. This only benefited her daughter, because she learned English while maintaining Chinese. Having a conversation with my son in Yup'ik, I knew, would be a slow progress, but like Li I

had to take an active role in my child's bilingual development. I felt I had let too much time slip away already. I so desired my son to become a fluent Yup'ik speaker! I thought Li's (1999) case study was a perfect example of what I could do as a parent to help my son reinvigorate his first language. Despite my uncertainty with my son, I wanted to try. Even at my age, I needed a hero.

As I was considering a topic for my research, I kept thinking about my child. His Yup'ik. Come to think of it-I rarely heard him speak it. And I kept thinking back to Li's (1991) article. I found myself wanting to reteach Yup'ik to him, wanting to find out if I could actually do it. Yet I was somewhat reluctant to involve him in my research. As a parent, I am naturally protective of my child. I want to shield him from hurtful comments from others, or harmful dangers from the outside. I want him to be free of illnesses. I want him to stay away from illegal substances, and stand strong when faced with the negativity of life. I want him to be proud of himself no matter what others say. My world revolves around him; he is my child. Yet, I did not want him to feel pressured into doing something he did not want to do.

In the summer of 2007, I approached him about my restored interest in helping him reinvigorate his Yup'ik. Even before I decided on a research topic, I asked him numerous times if he would be willing to participate in relearning his Yup'ik. He always responded in the positive, either with a slight nod, or a resigned yes. He was reluctantly willing, but not defiant either. In a roundabout way, I was asking for permission from him. If he showed any hint of resistance, I wouldn't do it. I

considered this my first step to help maintain our language. I had to start somewhere, but I learned very quickly that I had to start with *me.*

After much careful thought, I decided upon my research question: Can my role as a parent reinvigorate my child's first language, Yup'ik, after he has already become English dominant? I asked this question because English, although a "minority" language in this community, is filtering into the every day lives of its members. I aimed to examine in-depth why and when I began speaking primarily in English to my child at home. What were the factors? How and why did I "allow" him to speak more predominantly in English?

I have been a certified secondary teacher for 24 years in my village's school. The first year (1979) when our high school opened, I worked as a clerk typist in the school office. I saw students who were struggling to do their school work in English, and I saw teachers who were struggling just as hard to teach those kids who did not know enough English to do their school work. I wanted to be the bridge between these two sides.

As a secondary teacher, I primarily use English as the mode of instruction. The system is designed for students to take and complete specified classes in English in order to receive their diplomas. Basically, I do what is expected of me. I've become aware that I've been helping my students' transition to English to become English dominant. All the workshops, trainings, and conferences I've attended were all geared to doing this. I don't think of it as a choice, mind you. It just became...became. Was this why there was language shift from Yupik to English?

Since I teach mostly in English all day, I got too used to it. I work with certified non-Native teachers, too, so I had to communicate with them in English. As a result, my child heard me talk in that language all the time, so he spoke it all the time too. In addition, we read and wrote in English. The media we were exposed to was all in English: television, music, books, and games. You name it, English was there.

Pacini-Ketchabaw, Bernhard, and Freire (2001) did a study on Latino parents in Canada. They found that the parents were bombarded with every day concerns, and so were struggling to maintain their first language. This was what I experienced. To keep Yup'ik strong at home took much effort on my part. Working all day with students left me tired at the end of the day. Being so emotionally drained at the end of the workday, I just didn't have the energy to continue trying to speak in Yup'ik.

I didn't realize using English on a daily basis had taken over my home life so much that trying to use Yup'ik exclusively seemed foreign. Just like the parents in the Pacini-Ketchabaw, Bernhard, and Freire (2001) study, I was trying to be in control of my home life, but it was easier to give in to English. It dawned on me that teaching in English at school helped lessen my son's Yup'ik. It's no wonder he doesn't speak it fluently at home. I use too much English. It didn't help that we rarely sat down to converse (or try to)-"it doesn't help that I'm not much of a talker in the first place" (Journal entry, September 30, 2008).

So has using English as a mode of instruction been carried over to my home? When my child entered the school system as a Kindergartener, he was in the Yupik First Language Program (YFL). YFL is a transitional model intended to prepare

students to enter English only classes and succeed. Children learn to read, write, and speak in Yup'ik from Kindergarten until 3rd grade. Then they go through a transition year to prepare them for English only classes (Williams and Rearden, 2006). Through the YFL program, my son learned to read, write, and speak Yupik. *But*, we still rarely spoke it at home, nor did we read or write in Yupik. Still, that system gave him some additional background in Yupik.

Once he exited out of the YFL Program, English became his dominant language. He has done well academically in English, taken Standard Based Assessments in reading, writing, and math in that language and passed them with flying colors. As a parent, I am proud of his excellence in school, but with my new awareness, I feel I have failed him in maintaining our Yupik.

My village is my world. Both Yup'ik and English have become so interwoven in my daily life that it has become the status quo. But because of Tununak's remoteness, I took for granted who and what I am; I didn't really pay attention to the notion of being bilingual. Every now and then, the information I heard and read about bilingualism would surface-especially at the beginning of the school year. It was a new teacher thing anyway. "Yeah? Okay." was my attitude. I wasn't really bothered about saving our Yup'ik language or keeping our language alive. I treated this as something that was happening outside of my village.

Since my awareness, I have been paying more attention to how much Yupik and English are being used in the community. Another article that caught my attention was "Loss and Maintenance of First Language Skills: Case Studies of Hispanic

Families in Vancouver" by Guardada (2002). This article made me aware that a language cannot stand alone. The parents in Guardada's (2002) study wanted to be active participants in their children's first language maintenance at home, but found it was no easy task. They had moved to a predominantly English speaking community, so the parents had to compete with their children's peers who spoke English. Removed from their homeland, their cultural ties were limited and their L1 community was lacking. Additional support was not there. I absolutely understood. My child wasn't learning his Yup'ik because I was not helping him.

Guardada's (2002) article made me understand that I needed to get through the initial phase of self-discovery before I could actually expect my child to speak fluently in Yupik. I was too concerned if he understood me or not; I am yet too wary if he feels comfortable enough or not to do this. Even for me, as a Yupik speaker, I was baffled- how should I do it? Because of this wariness, I tended to keep using English at home, so he could understand what I was saying. Unknowingly then, English crept in again. This slow realization has made me more aware of how I use Yupik and English, both at home and at school.

The whole process of becoming aware about my own situation seems paradoxical. I haven't lost my first language, but it has begun with my child. Still, it must begin with me, not him. In my effort to regain what is already lost, I've been trying to speak it more at home. Thus far I found that my efforts are just beginning to bear fruit, but I'm only scratching the surface of "beginning".

Stevens (2003) clearly states that "...the main element lacking in language preservation is a base of Native speakers large enough to support daily conversation" (p. 157). My effort thus far has been focused on my son and myself, trying to rebuild our Yup'ik at home. But to make it into a strong foundation, we need more speakers involved with us.

What a daunting task ahead of me.

Organization of the Thesis

The rest of the thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 outlines my research methodology, and why the use of autoethnography for my thesis was appropriate. This chapter also includes the procedures I followed, a description of my participants and setting, and a discussion of the analytical frameworks I used to organize my data. In Chapter 3, I tell my story of becoming aware. To continue telling my story, I used critical events in Chapter 4 that show why my child's Yup'ik was weakening. In the final chapter, I analyzed Hinton's (2002) language myths, relating them to my becoming aware as a parent, school teacher, and a community member. Also, I provided an advice section and my action plan.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Research Design

The research design of this inquiry is qualitative. Denzin & Lincoln (1994) state that the qualitative researcher studies "things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.... hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand" (p. 2).

I initially intended to take an active role in helping reinvigorate my Yupik language by teaching it to my child at home. I wanted to see if as a parent, I could have an effect on improving my child's first language, Yupik. My research, then, was intended to document my child's re-acquisition of Yup'ik. As I began my research, however, I discovered this was not as easy a task as I thought it would be. Over time, my research became a personal journey of self-discovery as I attempted to make sense of the interactions between my son and myself, and interpreting them in terms of the meanings we both bring to them... hoping always to get a better fix on why reinvigorating his Yup'ik language skills was not an easy task.

Within qualitative research, the two methodologies I utilized were action research and autoethnography.

Action Research

According to Herr and Anderson (2005), action research is "an inquiry that is done *by* or *with* insiders to an organization or community, but never *to* or *on* them. It is a reflective process... (p. 30)." Instead of an outsider coming into my home to do research on me and my child's interaction, I wanted to provide genuine data from the inside- reflecting on what I experienced as I attempted to define my role as a parent taking responsibility to reinvigorate my child's Yupik language. My research provides an emic point of view, or an insider's look at (Frank, 1999, p. 4), language loss and language revitalization in the home.

Action research is a cyclical process. The process includes the following: 1). to develop a plan of action to make improvements on the current situation; 2.) to act to apply the plan; 3.) to observe the outcomes of action; and 4.) to reflect on these outcomes as source of information for additional planning (Kemmis, 1982, as cited in Herr and Anderson, 2005, p. 5). As I encountered problems or obstacles to speaking the home language, I faced those problems and posed questions that helped me to *reflect* upon them and overcome, change or adapt my approach.

For example, my original plan was to reintroduce Yup'ik at home in order to reinvigorate his usage. I wanted to strengthen his Yup'ik. Initially, I aspired to become actively involved by speaking it to him on a daily basis, reading Yup'ik books with him, and even recording our sessions together. The notion of having an active role as a parent seemed easy to achieve at the time. As I began my research, I learned very

quickly that my attempts were not bearing the expected fruit-changing long established habits can take years and I was naively expecting to make changes over night. I then shifted my attention to understanding why my initial plan was not meeting my expectations. I tried to understand why I was having difficulty getting started in using Yup'ik exclusively at home. Apparently, there was something more here than just learning a language.

I have since come to the conclusion that I cannot reinvigorate my child's Yup'ik all by myself. And I intend to continue my research through an action plan (found in Chapter 5, p. 61). I intend to work on building an L1 community for my child, and most importantly, to rebuild my own L1 community. When my child sees me using Yup'ik, he will. In addition, I want to explore ways I can help him more with his Yup'ik identity.

Autoethnography

Spradley (1979) suggests that autoethnography is a useful tool for understanding how people see their experience (p. iv). Ellis and Bochner (2000) define autoethnography as an "autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural (p. 739)". Freeman (1994) reinforces this notion emphasizing "the need for researchers to not only include the participants' voices, but also to listen carefully to what those voices have to say about what is going on in their cultural context and why" (p. 5).

As I attempted to reinvigorate my child's first language, things I hadn't been aware of surfaced. I began to understand how my experiences of home, school and community influenced what I was doing.

Autoethnography has allowed me to tell my story the way I perceive it. Pratt (1991) refers to autoethnography as " text, in which... people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage representations others have made of them" (p. 2). I was the insider looking within, and telling my story the way I experienced it. I was choosing to define myself on my own terms. I was not simply reacting to the literature about language revitalization. I was telling my story from the insider's perspective.

Chang (2008) states there are three benefits to using autoethnography. First, it is user-friendly, to both the writer and the reader. The researcher's personal experiences are considered to be the author's primary data source (p. 49). Because they are familiar with the data, they have inside knowledge of the culture and society they are describing. Since autoethnographers use their own voice, their audience responds to them on a personal level, which may not be achieved in most academic writing.

Second, autoethnography is a way for researchers to come to understand themselves and others. They use self-examination and self-understanding. An autoethnography can allow readers to either be inspired or provoked through self-examination and self-understanding, which compliments the notion of reflection in action research cycle.

Thirdly, autoethnography can help other researchers and readers "help themselves and each other correct cultural misunderstandings, develop cross-cultural

sensitivity, and respond to the needs of cultural others effectively" (Chang, 2008, p.54).

Chang (2008) warns of five "pitfalls" of autoethnography. First, the author may become too overly focused on self rather than showing a relationship between self and others. The author warns when the narration becomes too personalized, the intention of trying to understand the cultural aspect is not met. Wall (2006) similarly warns of becoming too narcissistic (p.8). As I wrote my autoethnography, I avoided this pitfall by solely focusing on the cultural aspects I found relating to maintaining Yup'ik language.

Second, the author may become too carried away in telling his/her story, so that the important information is overlooked. The purpose of an autoethnography is to provide data analysis and interpretation. The author may be tempted just to tell stories, and fail to provide his/her audience with meaningful insight into what these stories mean (Chang, 2008, p. 55). As I analyzed my journal, I chose specific data that provided insights as to why my child (or myself) was not using Yup'ik. These were incidents that presented enlightening revelations about how and why language was and wasn't being reinvigorated.

The third pitfall is for the author to rely too much on memory as the main source of data. Chang (2008) points out that memory can be selective and retold in such a fashion that it doesn't seem real. Thus the autoethnographer must have various sources of data for "triangulation that will help enhance the content accuracy and validity of autoethnographic writing" (p. 55). Since I kept a journal to record accounts

of anything having to do with language use, it supplied concrete evidence to things that occurred. Using literature to back up my findings was helpful too.

The fourth pitfall of using autoethnography is assuming that confidentiality does not matter, because the researcher is writing her/his own story. Personal stories involve other people; therefore, the researcher should acknowledge them in his/her autoethnography to protect their confidentiality (Chang, 2008, p. 55). As I wrote my autoethnography, I was careful not to mention names, especially my child's. My intention was to tell *my* story without undue focus on particular individuals.

The final pitfall is not fully understanding what the intention of an autoethnography is. This term has many other synonyms attached to it, so one has to be careful that it does not get misconstrued as one just telling a story. According to Ellis and Bochner (2000,), authethnography has been referred to as personal narratives, confessional tales, impressionistic accounts, interpretive biography, complete-member research, emotionalism, among others (p. 739). Its main emphasis is to connect the personal to the cultural aspects.

Procedures

My main methods of data collection were observation and journaling. I wrote twice a week, between half a page and a page each time, during the course of the year 2008-2009). I recorded my observations on anything relating to usage of the Yupik language at home, school, and outside of both. I recorded what my child said in Yupik, and my reactions to them. As I wrote, I included what was going on at the time when

he spoke Yupik- AND when I used Yupik with him. Part of my goal was to understand what circumstances made me use Yupik more naturally. I also included my interactions with other community members when we used Yupik as the medium of communication.

Participants

My research included two participants: myself (mother) and my child. I am a 52-year-old Yupik woman whose first language is Yupik. Both of my parents spoke only Yupik at home. My siblings spoke it all the time too. Even when I was growing up, people around me would converse in Yupik. I didn't learn to read and write in Yup'ik until my junior year in high school (1977), but I did not keep practicing those new skills. I took one semester of Yup'ik orthography at UAF (1979), but I rarely put it to use.

I spoke only in that language until English was introduced to me when I entered elementary school in 1964. The school was administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

I do not recall how I learned to read, write and speak in English, but it was the only language of instruction when I attended the BIA school. I am a fluent speaker of that language today. It is my second language. At home, with my child, it is the dominant language we use rather than my first language, Yupik.

Since the introduction of English in my life, I have been fully self-conscious of being "Alaskan Native". There was apparently a "dominant" society other than my

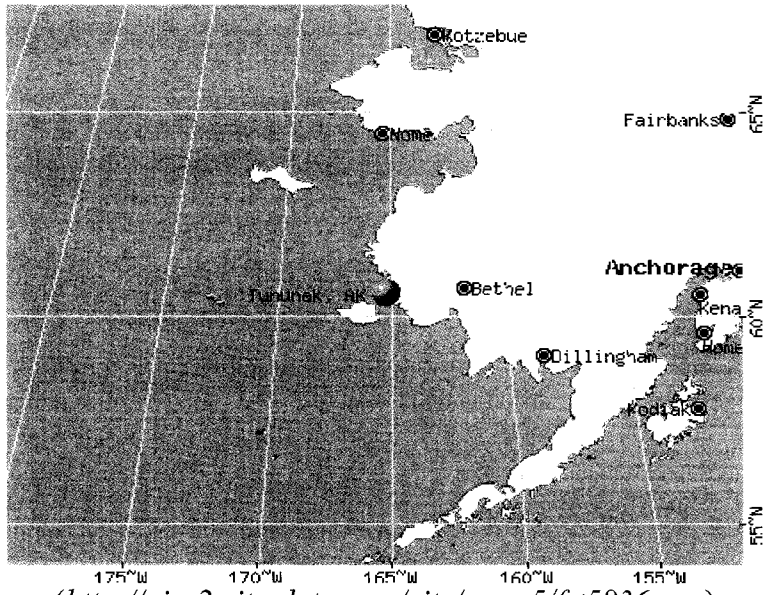
own. I was acutely aware of speaking and writing in Standard English. I heard stories, from those who attended high schools outside of the villages, of being punished for speaking their own indigenous language. That gave me inner motivation to learn English the "correct" way. At that time, my assumption was White people knew how to speak their own language well.

Since I received my state teaching license in fall of 1985, I've been teaching at my village school. I spent one year in another village. In both situations, I have primarily used English as the language of instruction. I felt it was my job to teach my students English (like me). This has been a personal struggle in all my 24 years of teaching: Am I doing my job, or am I helping them lose the language?

My 15-year-old child speaks English predominantly but has often told me he can "understand" Yupik. When he entered Kindergarten in fall of 2000, his language of instruction was Yupik as our school has a Yupik First Language Program in which lower elementary instruction is largely in Yup'ik. Through that program, he learned to read, write, and speak in Yupik. He transitioned into English as a third-grader, and has done well academically in that language since then. He has continued to pass reading, writing, and math sections of the state's Standard Based Assessments (SBA) since he began taking them as a 4th grader. The language of instruction he primarily receives at school is English. He's learning to play basketball and has been participating in Native Youth Olympics since he turned 12 years old. He does some traditional hunting, but not as much as the other boys in the village. His interests are math and science.

Setting

Of the three villages on Nelson Island, Tununak is the oldest. It became an established village soon after the BIA came and began formal schooling in the late 1800s. Catholic missionaries became a presence, too, around the same time. The oldest section of the village is situated on a peninsula, whereas the newer buildings are on the hill.



(http://pics2.city-data.com/city/maps5/frt5836.png)

Figure 1: Location of Tununak in Southwestern Alaska

The present school building is located on top of a hill, overlooking the village. In the early 80s, the high school was built, and eventually in the early 90s, the elementary wing was added on. This is about the time when the BIA handed over the control of the elementary school to the state, via the Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD).

My son and I live in rented LKSD teacher housing, located at the north end of the village. That places us away from the main village. Teacher housing was included when the BIA built the second school (the largest building in the photograph below). This was also handed over to LKSD. Of the whole village, the present school and BIA building are the only ones with running water and a sewage system.

(http://avec.securesites.net/images/communities/Tununak%20Aerial.JPG)

Figure 2: Aerial view of Tununak

I vaguely remember playing in the "old" school, when it was no longer used, so this must have been when or after the second one was built. This old school was the same my mom attended in the mid-1930s up to grade 5 or 6. That's how long the formal school system has been around in the village.

At present, the village's population is approximately 300. Its members are predominantly Yupik. There is a small number of White teachers, and three Caucasians who married into the village.

When I was young, everyone spoke Yup'ik. Now there is a distinction of who speaks it well or not. People born before 1970 seem to be the strongest speakers of Yup'ik. When they meet each other anywhere, they converse in that language. Those born between 1970 and 1990 use a combination of both Yup'ik and English. Those born after 1990 mostly speak in English, with lots of code-switching involved. This is my son's generation. The generation after him use English all the time.

The economy of the village fluctuates seasonally. There are many construction/labor jobs available in the summer, because of new housing or other. There is commercial halibut fishing also. There is much subsistence fishing and hunting. In the winter, it is the opposite. The ones who have year-long jobs are those who work for the stores, clinic, and two government entities. There are also those who work for LKSD, which lasts from August to May. The main sources of income include longevity checks, Social Security and Alaska Permanent Fund Dividends. By an outsider, my village would be considered "poor".

There is a runway located at the south of the village, across from the peninsula (there is a future plan to build a new runway). Airplanes come and go daily, if the weather permits. They shuttle passengers between Bethel (the main hub of Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta) and smaller villages. Also, they bring and take mail, or bring "stuff for the stores". To travel to a faraway place like Anchorage or to the lower 48

states, using airplanes is the only way to go. I cannot imagine living without a runway- it has become a connection to the outside world.

In the summer, barges bring fuel like stove oil and motor gas, and large items like aluminum boats or housing materials. Snowmachines are used in the winter to travel to and from nearby villages.

Analytical Frameworks

I used two frameworks for analyzing my data. First, I used Guardada's (2002) six themes to organize the events of becoming aware about language. These themes include: the role of L1 culture, the encouragement to speak the L1, the consequences of L1 loss and maintenance, optimism about L1 development, the importance of L1 literacy, and L1 community. These helped me to organize my writing by categorizing my observations and findings into each appropriate theme.

Second, I used "critical incidents" to organize the telling of my story. Angelides (2001) states that critical incidents "are not necessarily sensational events involving a lot of tension" (p. 431). These incidents can happen any day, anytime, anywhere an individual encounters problems. The key is that the researcher must reflect upon the incident in order to solve the problem or improve the situation. In Chapter 4, I discuss several key events that gave me insights into how and why I was not providing a first language environment for my child. Most importantly, they allowed me to reflect upon them as to how my child's Yup'ik was improving and why

he didn't speak it in the first place. These events were connected to my becoming aware about my child and myself as I attempted to reinvigorate his Yup'ik.

In reflecting upon these critical incidents, I "focus[ed] on the *meaning* of the incidents rather than on the *experience* of them" (Griffin, 2003, p. 210). In this manner, I reflected upon them and came to an understanding of how my cultural setting affected my Yup'ik language use (or lack of use). During the course of my research, I realized how much I take our Yup'ik language for granted, and through much reflection and introspection, I gained a deeper understanding of myself.

Chapter 3: My Story

Since July of 2007, I have pored through numerous articles on language revitalization and language loss, all relating to second language acquisition. I became greatly annoyed at times at the realization that my Yup'ik language was on the decline, yet I was driven to understand more about it. There was one study, "Loss and Maintenance of First Language Skills: Case Studies of Hispanic Families in Vancouver" by Guardada (2002) that caught my attention.

His aim was to understand the parents' perspective on maintaining the home language. His findings indicated *how* the first language was approached played a role in whether the language was maintained or lost. The parents in Guardada's study wanted to be active participants in their children's first language maintenance at home, but found it was no easy task. I absolutely agreed. Most importantly, the article gave me an understanding of why my child wasn't learning his Yup'ik-I was not helping him. I was neglecting my parental responsibility to pass on my Yup'ik.

Guardada's (2002) study involved four Hispanic families that had migrated from Central America to Vancouver, British Columbia. His aim was to "explore the loss and maintenance of Spanish in Hispanic children in Vancouver from the perspective of parents" (p. 341). The parents' first language was Spanish, but their children were becoming predominantly English speaking. The situation was sounding too familiar for me-but with Yup'ik. He separated the parents into two sets: one set was succeeding and their children were becoming bilingual; the other set was losing

their Spanish, and their children were becoming monolingual in English. I felt I was in the latter category, although unknowingly.

The parents in Guardada's (2002) study felt it was their responsibility to maintain their cultural identity by speaking in their L1. Maintaining Spanish at home was both a means of communication and a way to keep their family connected. But with English filtering in more and more from school and the larger society to the homes, a language gap developed between the children who favored English and the grandparents who spoke in Spanish. I found this situation described my son and myself, not my son and his grandmother. Since I seldom heard him try to speak Yup'ik, I kept assuming he had forgotten it all. But with what Yup'ik he knew, he talked more to his grandmother than he did with me. Indeed, there was a connection between my son and his grandmother after all.

Guardada's (2002) study revealed six themes that played out for these families. These themes made sense to me. I lived them and they helped me become more aware of how I can maintain Yup'ik at home.

Theme One: The Role of the L1 Culture

First, the researcher found that while all four families placed importance on their culture, *how* culture was transferred mattered. The maintenance families emphasized that their children should be proud of their Hispanic heritage. Therefore, the children were able to still speak in Spanish. The other two families were not ardently showing their pride and were unsuccessful in keeping their home language.

The latter felt very familiar. It is not that I am not proud of my culture, I just wasn't aware that my role was that important in keeping my home language strong via having pride in my culture.

Because of our remoteness, we take for granted who and what we are; no one really has told us we are "bilinguals". We are a majority in this community, yet we are not aware of the role we play in maintaining our children's Yup'ik language. As a result, we don't seem to have strong advocacy for continual usage of our Yup'ik language, nor have we specifically explored the advantages or disadvantages of being bilingual.

An example from my culture that truly does maintain Yup'ik is Eskimo dancing. Since my child was in elementary school, he has become a singer, a drummer, and a dancer; once he composed a song, which was inspired by his *Ap'a* (Grandpa). When my village hosted a dance festival in mid-spring of 2009 in which five villages from the surrounding area participated, I attended all three nights (Friday to Sunday). This was a great social event that was a welcome relief from the humdrum of the dead of winter. My son took part in the dancing, too. I understood then the importance of such events:

> As they learn, the youngsters gain respect for their tribe and for themselves as a meaningful part of its system. By participating, they develop positive identity as tribal members and positive self-esteem as individuals (Gale, 1985, p. 19).

Each dancing group would do five songs. Men would sing, while all the women and some men danced. When the group was done, the next one would get ready for their turn. Then a male or female elder from that village would give a short talk in Yup'ik on life skills like hunting/fishing in the ocean, child-rearing, or food preparation. The audience members of all ages were encouraged to listen to what the elders had to say. In fact, when younger kids milled around too much, they were told to sit down to listen! This is one aspect of our culture that is practiced-when an elder talks, everyone is to be quiet and listen. And you know what? This is what I expect from my students too!

Whenever an elder gave a talk, I found myself listening intently, as I heard words that I hadn't heard for a long while. I experienced a feeling of nostalgia, a feeling that made me wistful, yet regretful about Yup'ik. McKay's (2003) words of encouragement came alive for me right then and there:

> [A]nyone who is interested in learning his/her language, no matter what it is, [should] simply visit with a speaker. Experience listening to a speaker and witness the spirit of the language (p. 165).

Another aspect of our culture has to do with subsistence activities, of which one is to gather mouse food in late fall. These are plant roots (*iitat)* and bulbs (*ut'ngungsaat*) from certain plants that mice collect to put in their caches. When we go to look for them, we say are going "mouse food hunting." When my mom was still physically able, she loved to go every late fall. She still loves to eat *iitat*, but she

prefers *ut'ngungsaat*. I used to go with her when I was younger, but I rarely do it anymore.

So one nice, September afternoon, I took my son mouse food hunting, to find and gather them for my mom. As we were walking on the soft, spongy tundra, I tried to initiate a conversation in Yup'ik, but it was not easy. I found myself overly concerned if he understood what I said, so I tended to translate what I had said in Yup'ik into English. According to Bell & Marlow (2009), elders involved in teaching the language often do this. They become concerned for the message rather than the language and therefore translate everything. This felt totally uncomfortable, totally not right, because this interaction was one way. How did I expect him to relearn Yup'ik if I kept doing this?

As we kept looking for mouse caches, whenever he found a cache of mouse food, he'd yell, "*Pitellrunga* (I caught some!). " His phrase was out of context; he should have used "*Nalkutua* (I found some)", but I didn't correct him at the time. I was too darned pleased with him! The idea of hunting and catching made enough sense to understand him. I enjoyed that excursion, because it reminded me of the times I went with my mom. I remembered how it was done, and I was showing how it was done to my son.

Theme Two: Encouragement to Speak the L1

The second theme that emerged from Guardada's study was about the role and form of parental encouragement to speak the first language. According to Guardada

(2002), "the type of encouragement that parents give to their children to speak the L1 (first language) can have either a facilitating or detrimental effect" (p. 355).

The maintenance parents used a positive approach with their children. They didn't force their children to speak the first language. The non-maintenance parents became authoritative and they demanded or forced their children to speak to them in Spanish, albeit without much success. This made me realize that I had no clear plan as to *how* I approached speaking Yup'ik at home. I didn't expect my child to speak it, nor did I use it with him. Things just were. Since my awareness, I have been more encouraging, yet wary of how I did it. I needed to be careful. I did not want to turn off my child from trying or he may not try at all.

Krashen's (Krashen 1985, as cited in Johnson 2004, p. 48) affective filter comes into play here. In simpler terms, he hypothesized that language learners can have a "mental block". You know how you can't seem to learn something sometimes? Well, this happens too when you can't seem to learn a new language. Maybe you're too tired, "don't wanna" or you are too scared to make a mistake. Such feelings can act like a filter preventing the language from getting in, preventing learning. I didn't want my child to raise his filter and shut down.

One evening I had dinner at a friend's house. As we sat drinking tea I heard over the VHF radio the Student Council President make an announcement about a movie night that evening at the school. He did it in English at first. When he was done, someone encouraged him over the radio to do it again "in Yup'ik". He complied and tried but his Yup'ik was so broken up. It was very obvious he was not sure how to

properly say what he wanted to say. Actually, he said something like "Movie night-aq seven o'clock-ami school-arvigmi." I felt very badly for him. Yet this was another lesson for me: I had to encourage my son, but in order for him to speak it well, he had to hear how it was spoken, but more importantly, he had to speak it too.

Now I understand Swain's (Swain 1985, as cited in Johnson, 2004, pp. 51-52) comprehensible output hypothesis. She says that learning a language requires the learner to use the language. When a learner notices a problem, they can work through that problem by changing what they say, by changing their output. This change helps them to learn something new and helps move them forward. I witnessed this type of behavior with my son throughout the course of my research.

Whenever he was getting ready to say something in Yup'ik, it would take him a few minutes to process the phrasing in his head, and then he would try to verbalize what he was visualizing. If what he visualized did not match what he was saying, he would pause and try again. Because he hadn't enough practice with his oral language, how he should pronounce syllables would not quite come out right.

Theme Three: Consequences of L1 Loss and Maintenance

Guardada (2002) stated that there are costs of both L1 loss and maintenance. The costs of L1 loss are well known. They include eroding family relationships, poor self-image and cultural identity, compromised school relationships, and low school performance (p. 347).

The costs of L1 maintenance include lack of prestige and/or rejection of the first language and culture by the dominant community (Guardada, 2002, p. 346). This may result in the community devaluing the home language. As a result, parents may switch to English in an effort to help their children 'fit in' to the dominant community, including having friends outside of the home. McCarty, et al (2006b) puts it quite succinctly,

> [Y]outh and adults are keenly cognizant of the privileging of English and the diffuse social, linguistic, political, and economic forces that iconically and concretely link English to whiteness, modernization, and opportunity. Even for children whose first language is Navajo, these larger societal forces persuade many that it is better-and easier-to speak English and 'be white'." (p. 42)

My child is my world, so if I want him to be happy, am I willing to give up my own first language? I grappled with this question during my research, because I felt this was a no-win situation. If he relearned Yup'ik, his friends might make of fun of him, and if he lost it completely, his elders might make him feel uncomfortable.

An example of such discomfort was the time when I took him to the clinic for his appointment. While we were in the exam room, the health aide asked him in English, "Can you translate into Yup'ik?" "Not really", he answered right away. Then after a few moments of processing, he said, "*Cararmek* (A little bit)". My reaction was a feeling of slight embarrassment, and discomfort. As a Yup'ik speaker, my son

should be a competent Yup'ik speaker, but he wasn't. He wasn't. I was starting to wonder if some community members thought he spoke fluently, because I did. Wrong.

There are several parents in my community who do not want their children to be taught in Yup'ik at school. Some feel because English is the dominant language, the school should use English as a language of instruction beginning in Kindergarten. There are also those whose children speak predominantly English. They are concerned their children won't understand instruction in Yup'ik.

Some parents choose not to let their children become bilingual. They may simply believe it's not worth it to "save" the home language. According to Barron-Hauwaert (2004), they "simply do not care about passing on their language" (p. 111). Unintentionally, did I not care enough about my own first language that my child's second language (English) has replaced his first language (Yup'ik)? This awareness made me feel deeply regretful.

Theme Four: Optimism About L1 Development

Guardada's (2002) fourth finding was optimism about L1 development. Despite the children's exposure to English, *all* the parents in Guardada's study felt their children were progressing in learning Spanish and felt optimistic they would succeed with it in the future. I wished I had their optimism.

There was an article in the local newspaper about the UAF Linguistics Department receiving a million dollar grant to study endangered languages. To me, this sounded like trying to save the endangered emperor geese. It all reminded me of

Dementi-Leonard & Gilmore's (1991) statement about outside experts labeling a language as dying. It really can "undermine the very notion of local control, local meaning, and certainly local hope" (p. 39). This indeed had a doom-and-gloom aura about it, but that became my reality.

My growing awareness of language shift from Yup'ik to English in my village has been disheartening, and discouraging. But that is the reality I am coping with. I had been experiencing it most of my life, now my son was the result of it.

Theme Five: Importance of L1 Literacy

The fifth theme was the importance of L1 literacy. Both sets of parents valued reading and writing in Spanish. However, only the children of the maintenance parents had become literate in Spanish. Although the language loss parents desired that their children become literate in Spanish, they had not done anything to get them there.

My child learned to read and write in Yup'ik in school. As a parent, I have not placed importance on our Yup'ik literacy, because I view Yup'ik as primarily an oral language.

The majority of the community lacks literacy skills in Yup'ik, but interestingly, they can read and write in English. It seems natural then that "people shy away from trying to read Yup'ik writing" (Journal entry, April 12, 2009). This was true for parents whose children were in the YFL program. Their children brought their homework home, but most times, the parents couldn't help them.

As a schoolteacher, I rarely write in Yup'ik. But with my awareness of our language, I am finding myself using my Yup'ik writing skills more. I'm letting my students use Yup'ik words in their English writing. In one of my classes, two boys wrote in English for a role-playing assignment. They were having difficulty in composing their sentences-trying to make them sound right. Then I had the idea that they could use Yup'ik if they wanted to. They verbalized words and wrote them down in Yup'ik with little difficulty. I was surprised they still knew how to write in Yup'ik. Anyway, they enjoyed doing that particular class assignment.

After that, I began to notice that my students used code-switching in their writings. Not from Yup'ik to English, but the other way around. For example, one wrote "So *naklegnarqeq* (showing pity)" (Journal entry, February 11, 2009). In fact, I had suggested they italicize the Yup'ik words they include in their papers. This showed they did know their Yup'ik, but it was not used enough via speaking, reading, and writing.

Theme Six: L1 Community

The final theme Guardada (2002) identified was the role of the L1 community in language maintenance. All of Guardada's parents talked about the importance of speaking the first language at home. At the same time, all of them felt their children needed more than what the parents could provide. As with all children, they spent time with their English speaking peers, which cut into family time. Simply put, the children needed more people to converse with in their first language to maintain it.

I had been using Yup'ik at home, but it was not enough. It was then I realized that I needed help from outside the home. I knew I couldn't do it alone anymore. Cooper (1989) sums it up quite succinctly that unless there is support outside the home, trying to maintain a language at home is probably futile (p. 108). No wonder I felt I was making no progress with my child. I was so naïve! It dawned on me that I shouldn't have to confine Yup'ik just within my home. It was me who carried that language, not the building. So I put effort in to speaking Yup'ik more and more outside the home.

I rarely took part in community activities. I felt I needed to attend more public functions, in order to continue to hear and practice the Yup'ik language (Fishman, 1991). Our language is transmitted via dancing, singing, talks, and just using it. These were possible ways to maintain Yup'ik. As Dementi-Leonard & Gilmore (1999) explain:

> Community language learning takes place in a variety of settings, from community and family gatherings, including dances and potlatches, storytelling, and camp settings, to formal classes for college credit (p. 49).

Learning can even happen in the school hallway or waiting for a plane. On the last day of state testing in April 2009, I sat down on the bench across from the school's main office. There were two Yup'ik teacher aides already there. All of us were under stress, relieved the testing was over, and wondering how our kids did. All of us were talking in Yup'ik about this and that. I was reminded that even I needed to immerse myself from time to time in Yup'ik. As McKay (2003) says "[i]t is necessary to be

around as many speakers as possible because each speaker has her or his own way of conveying thoughts in the language" (p. 164).

Maybe that's why my son hasn't learned to speak the language. He does not hear it enough at home. To maintain my language, I have to let my son hear the language so he can learn *how to* say the phrases. Most importantly, I needed to keep practicing my language by using it daily. "I have to begin with me if I want my son to begin speaking Yup'ik again" (March 26, 2008). I fully understood the notion of "practice makes perfect".

When my son and I were returning home from a trip to Bethel, we got off in a neighboring village, because the weather wasn't good enough for the plane to land in Tununak. We stayed with one of our relatives to wait for my younger brother who was snowmachining over to pick us up.

As I visited with my cousin, we just conversed in Yup'ik the whole time. This was a momentous occasion to me, because I realized that "I'd been in my little world so much I've forgotten how important it is to communicate with others-IMMERSION is the key!" (Journal entry, March 20, 2008)". I found myself enjoying our time together.

As my cousin and I kept talking, I would glance at my son, who was just sitting nonchalantly nearby, watching TV. I thought he was listening to us. After we had gotten home, I commented how much fun I had when I was involved in a Yup'ik conversation. I asked him if he had paid attention-remembering when he admitted that

he couldn't speak Yupi'k-thinking that this type of situation would help him more. His response: "No." What? Ohhhh, this was not easy.

I have become aware that in order for Yup'ik to thrive in my home, I have to consider the themes that Guardada (2002) found in his study. Because of my research, I have come to an understanding that being Yup'ik entails both language and culture.

Chapter 4: Critical Incidents

During the course of my research, I kept a journal to record my observations. In analyzing my entries, I realized they were often more about what I learned about myself than about my child. In the following chapter, I discuss several key events, or critical incidents, that showed up in my journal. These events not only helped chart his progress in relearning his Yup'ik, but also at the same time helped me to see the following four themes in my data:

- *Why doesn't he speak Yup'ik well?*
- *Language can be emotional: Shame*
- *He speaks to his grandmother/elders but not me*
- *He's becoming aware, too.*

All of these touched upon why his Yup'ik was weakening in the first place, and the progress he was making in relearning his Yup'ik. They also helped me to understand language involved more than just usage. There were other factors that I need to take into consideration for my plan to be successful.

Why doesn't he speak Yup'ik well?

Prior to my research, I did not pay much attention to my child's Yup'ik. In fact, I seldom (if ever) heard him speak it. Actually, I seldom spoke it either. We used mostly English all the time at home, so I shouldn't have been surprised by this.

What jolted me into awareness was how little I used it with him. I assumed he spoke it all the time outside of the home.

During the course of my research, I became aware that one big reason why he did not use whatever Yup'ik he knew was *because he did not see nor hear me practice it.* Unknowingly then, I was not encouraging him to use it. One critical incident really gave me an understanding of why he wasn't much of a Yup'ik speaker anymore. One night in March of 2008, I asked him out of curiosity if he still *understood* Yup'ik. He told me he could "understand" Yupik, but that he'd forgotten how to pronounce it, how to say Yup'ik words. Thus he had trouble speaking it fluently. But what did that mean? He told me that he remembered learning Yupik words in school, but he "wasn't taught how to use them." Then he gave me the following explanation:

> When he was in school in 3T (transitioning from Yup'ik instruction to English), he only learned Yup'ik words, but was not taught how to use them for speaking. In his own words, he was "taught how to understand it, but not speak it" (Journal entry, March 14, 2008).

Well, if that was the intention of the YFL program, then it works. It is a transitional model-transitioning kids to English so they can leave Yup'ik behind (Marlow, 2004). But not to learn to speak Yup'ik? What I learned from him at that moment was that I was not there for him for his Yup'ik, not at home or anywhere else. I had become a parent who let the school take care of his Yup'ik learning. I hadn't done my part outside of school at all.

I was heartbroken. Was this my fault? How could I have let this happen? Because I haven't used Yupik on a daily basis at home, my child hadn't learned to use it. He may "know" words, but he hadn't applied them in real usage.

Dementi-Leonard & Gilmore (1999) found similar things in their research. They concluded that a lot of bilingual programs in Alaska were designed to teach students literacy skills, but with little emphasis on their speaking or oral comprehension (p. 43), they weren't learning to speak the Native language

The YFL program might have slowed his language shift, but once he exited that program, he rarely practiced Yup'ik anymore. He began to forget how to put Yup'ik words together. Like the children in Wyman's (2009) study, his Yup'ik was disappearing. I understood now why he had to think *how* to say something in Yup'ik before he said it. This reality was brought home for me one morning when he wasn't feeling well.

My son has bad colds that occasionally affect his lungs so that he has difficulty breathing. So to help him breathe better, he inhales the vapor form of the medicine albuterol using a nebulizer. Afterwards, I have to pat his back for at least 15 minutes to help loosen the mucus. This clears his lungs so he can breathe easier. So early one morning (Journal entry, April 11, 2008), he had taken his albuterol and I was patting his back. I must have sighed heavily then, the kind of sigh that indicates impatience. While lying flat on his stomach, he turned his head sideways and asked me, "*Qessarquqa*?"

For a brief moment, time froze. He had produced a *Yup'ik* sentence! It was the first time I can remember him saying something like that at home. Although spoken incorrectly (he *should have* said, "*Qessanarquqa* (Is it tedious?"), I was pleasantly surprised, yet confused. He was trying to verbalize what he had heard before. I found myself in a dilemma. Should I praise him for trying or should I correct him? What do I do?

Right then and there, I realized that because he hadn't used much Yup'ik, it had affected his pronunciation and phrasing when he used whatever Yup'ik he knew. So after two days (Journal entry, April 13, 2008), I wanted to hear if he could repeat a long phrase correctly. I told him to repeat this: "*Naklegnarqenriciaqliiniunga* (I am not really one to be pitied)."

"Nak-leng... nak-leng... nak-leng-qenliniuqa..."

He had trouble! He didn't know enough post bases! He kept skipping some of them. "He doesn't know how to say lengthy Yup'ik sentences," I thought. This confirmed my suspicion... he wasn't hearing enough Yup'ik. *Or, I was not speaking enough Yup'ik to him!* Either way, he was forgetting his Yup'ik.

I grappled with this new-found knowledge. I felt... lost. I couldn't believe that *my child* was forgetting his Yup'ik! I realized how much I had taken for granted. As a parent, I hadn't helped him at all with his Yup'ik. Then, in early February, I realized being a protective mother hen was not necessarily a good thing.

On February 5, 2009, I took him to the clinic for his Child Wellness checkup. This was to check his physical health-vision, fine motor skills, height, weight, and

vitals like body temperature, blood pressure, heart, and lungs. The health aide evaluating him was from another village, but we knew of each other. We talked in Yup'ik. My son was merely an observer and a listener, as the health aide checked his vitals.

Whenever she was done talking to me, she would then turn her attention to my son and ask him questions about his health. Each time, before he could respond, I would answer for him. I must have been feeling a bit overly protective. I did not want him to feel embarrassed (or me for that matter!). Because I kept answering for him, she must have started to assume that he didn't know Yup'ik. Eventually, the health aide began to use code-mixing like "Shirt-*an mayurlluku* (Pull up your shirt)," while using gestures. In hindsight, I was not helping him learn Yup'ik by speaking for him.

Language can be emotional: Shame

Through my research I became aware there is an emotional aspect attached to trying to maintain a language. No wonder people get so riled up about whether to continue or discontinue our school's YFL program. Through my child, I have come to grasp the true meaning of shame, because of his poor Yup'ik speaking skills, but especially from my lack of responsibility to help him with it.

I asked him one night (Journal entry, September 25, 2008) if he spoke in Yup'ik with his friends. He said he didn't, "because they'll make fun of me." The instinctual fierce feeling of motherly protectiveness came over me right then. The temptation just to forget it, to drop everything and forget it was so powerful at that

moment, because I wanted to shield him from such demeaning situations. To contain my anger, I just walked away. At times like this, I felt discouraged, because it wasn't easy to try to take back what was mostly lost.

There was shame involved here (McCarty, Romero, & Zepeda, 2006a). I had difficulty trying to continue my research as I tried "...to 'undo' the hegemonic practices of the past in order to 'get everybody back to where they feel good about themselves and what they can do'" (Dementi-Leonard & Gilmore, 1999, p. 45). This situation was so unfair!

It was still early in my research, yet I felt I was at an impasse. I became aware how much power shame had and it almost led me to make an irrational decision to discontinue my research. If I felt so much emotion about what I heard my son say, I can only imagine what he felt when he was there, an object of humiliation because he was trying to speak his Yup'ik! This reminded me of McCarty, Romero and Zepeda's (2006a) research when Navajo youth indicated that "speaking Navajo is an emblem of shame that must be renounced" (p.672).

On the other hand, as a parent, I am not guilt-free. I know that I have shamed him for *not* speaking his Yup'ik. Maybe I expected a miracle. Maybe I was feeling impatient for him to speak fluently. It just didn't occur to me how much influence I had on his emotions. But I saw the shame on his face.

On the evening of April 20, 2009, he came in to tell me, "Mom, I'm going to *maqii* (steambath)." Without hesitation on my part, I tersely said, "*Waten* (like this)." I enunciated each syllable as I told him, "*Ma-qi-yar-tu-qa-tar-tu-a* (I'm going to go

take a steambath)." Quickly followed by "*Yugtun qanraqluten* (Talk in Yup'ik!)" Now I wished I had told him why I said that. I meant for him to practice his Yup'ik so his pronunciation could improve. At the time, I thought this would make him relearn it quicker. Since my research began, I think this was the first time I was direct in wanting him to speak in Yup'ik.

What I saw on his face spoke more loudly than any words, a facial expression that showed shame. He knew he had not said the phrase correctly, and I had sounded disapproving. I became aware that I had to be respectful of his feelings if I expected him to continue practicing Yup'ik. I had to be more sensitive too. I did not want to shame him to the point that he did not want to try speaking in Yup'ik anymore. I am the most important person he has, and I must provide an atmosphere that it's okay to make mistakes every now and then.

It occurred to me earlier in my research that when I used Yup'ik with him, I "commanded" him, not talking to him. Several examples are "*Qanikcarata evcugluku* (Brush off the snow)!" or "*Amiik kelucarluku* (Lock the door)." I realized I was not using Yup'ik in a conversational way (Journal entry, February 5, 2009). Unawares, I was teaching him Yup'ik this way. When teaching in school, that was how I taught, by using words like "discuss", "talk", "show", "compare and contrast" and "explain". This was one way communication, where the recipient is expected to produce the results. Maybe that was how I learned Yup'ik.

That scenario was in the home, but there was still the shame we *both* experienced outside the home. One afternoon (Journal entry, September 30, 2008),

my son and I went into the local store. As we were standing, looking at some items, an elderly man came up to him and looked up at his face, trying to recognize him. Then the elder commented, "*Cugturivarcit* (You are getting tall). *Yugtun-qa qaneryugngauten* (Can you talk in Yup'ik)?"

I hadn't expected that from him so I tensed up, because the elder's expectation seemed so unachievable. I had difficulty containing myself, the self that wanted to remove and shelter him from situations like that. I wasn't sure if my child would be able to respond in Yup'ik, but he did with a quiet "*Cararmek* (little bit)". Does he feel embarrassed like I do? I felt ashamed for letting my son come to this point with his Yup'ik. This was not his fault.

The elder, satisfied with his answer, then said, "*Qaneryugngalliniuten* (You have the ability to talk)". Elders can emanate an aura that demands respect from those around them. I wondered if I had breathed a sigh of relief, the kind when you realize you've passed a test. Even elders have to assess kids these days to determine if they can speak Yup'ik or not. This had a hint of being reprimanded for acting white for not speaking in Yup'ik (Wyman, 2009)? I felt ashamed that my child didn't speak fluently like me.

My notion of having a home language was not optimum, it was no wonder he didn't speak much with me. Unawares, maybe I did not place much importance on using Yup'ik, so he didn't either. Even if he didn't speak that much with me, without my knowledge, he spoke more Yup'ik to his grandmother and his elders.

He spoke to his grandmother/elders but not me

When I finally did decide to "start" my research in March of 2008, one of the first phrases I noticed was, "*Uterteqatartua* (I am going home)." How well he had spoken that! Apparently, he had been using this phrase with his grandmother every time he was about to leave her house. "Well, that's something," I thought. "He hasn't forgotten this phrase that he learned as a child." Why haven't I noticed this before? Now that I was being more aware of our interaction, I realized that I did not know how much Yup'ik he knew. McCarty, Romero and Zepeda (2006b) were right, adults don't always realize how much of the first language youth know; they know more than they let on (p. 42).

Throughout the course of the year, I learned my son spoke more Yup'ik to my mom than to me. Numerous times, my mom told me how proud and pleased she was of her grandson, because "he was talking to her in Yup'ik." (Journal entry, July of 2008). She mentioned how well he's learned to correctly pronounce Yup'ik phrases.

She recapped what he said to her one time, putting her hands together to form the shape of the bowl. With a big, proud smile on her face, she repeated what he had asked, "*Akutartangqertuq* (Is there any akutaq)?" (Journal entry, March 4, 2009). As she said this, her dark eyes sparkled with happiness. I wondered if mine do that when I'm pleased with his Yup'ik.

Every now and then, our school hosts athletic events like basketball and Native Youth Olympics. Teachers volunteer to help out with anything that needs to be done. So one weekend, our school hosted a boys' basketball tournament. Three village teams

had come to play. These games attracted many community members to come watch the games.

Since my son was a student council member, he helped run the student store. My teacher duty was to monitor the hallways, so little kids wouldn't run amok. I stood where I could easily see him as he busily helped the customers.

I witnessed an event on February 13, 2009, that I thought was such an astonishing eye-opener! An elderly woman was buying some stuff from the student store and wanted a small box to put them in. My son searched for one, found one, and showed it to her, asking, "*Angsiyagtuq* (Is it too big)?" How perfectly he spoke it! "He knows more than I expected," I thought. I felt so ecstatic!

Why was it that he rarely used Yup'ik with me? I thought I was helping him reinvigorate his Yup'ik, but he was getting more practice from elders than from me. Another example that I witnessed proved this point.

As we were getting ready for the Easter week in April, 2009, one of the church organizers called and asked me in Yup'ik if my son could be one of the readers. I told her that he probably could but that he wasn't home at the moment. He would have to call her back. Later, when he called her back, I listened to him talk to her, "*Ciuliugua.* (I am Ciuliq). *First reading-aq piciqaqa* (I will do the first reading)." Impressive, very impressive! I was astounded how much Yup'ik he knew! I did not have to rescue him from that interaction!

I found it interesting to watch him-"it's like what he visualizes in his head, he tries to match verbally" (Journal entry, April 8, 2009). He stammered a bit, but once

he got it, his Yup'ik sounded perfect! Wow. I hoped my dark eyes sparkled like my mom's did!

During the course of the year, his Yup'ik speaking was gradually improving, but I was not quite sure why that was happening. Maybe it was because he knew I was expecting him to speak it, or that I placed value on our language, or that he had more people to talk to. Whatever attitude I was exuding must have had an effect on my son, because the last few months of my research year, he gained confidence to use more Yup'ik. This was what Guardada (2002) had meant when he said whether the first language was maintained or lost was dependent on *how* parents approached their home language. Li (1999) reinforces that by saying "our children's attitude towards, and the maintenance of their L1 depends mostly on how we parents look upon our L1, when, how often, and with whom we communicate in L1, and with what we associate L1..." (p. 115). So did my becoming aware about our language have an effect on him too? He had begun to be more open about his usage.

He's becoming aware, too

I had taken it for granted that our life in the village was our world. Thus, I was not aware that my parental role had an influence on my child's first language, until I began my research. My child knew what I was doing, or trying to do anyway. Several months after starting my research, on the evening of October 11, 2008, my son said to me, "It's getting easier and easier for me to speak in Yup'ik." Pleasantly surprised, I looked at him and asked why that was.

"I don't have to think what I want to say, except the words I don't know."

Simply put, he was relearning Yup'ik after all. I was extremely pleased. It was a profound moment for me that proved that when parents play an active role in maintaining the home language, children speak it. Barron-Hauwaert (2004) says that "consistent language use means a child can hear a good quantity of each language, and he or she can bond with a parent through language" (p. 27). He may be speaking more Yup'ik to his grandmother, but he was starting to use it with me often.

After my previous experiences in shaming him, I made extra effort to not sound judgmental about his Yup'ik. Eventually, I didn't have to think about it anymore. Using Yup'ik at home became more natural.

Since his friends were important to him, he would go out until curfew either at 9 PM on week nights or 10:30 PM on weekends. One time on October 3, 2008, before he went out, he said, "*Taquskuma egmian uterciqua* (I will go home right away when I finish)," which I considered to be the "longest Yup'ik phrase he said by himself!" He seemed more confident too in using Yup'ik. Whenever he came home at curfew, he would lock the door, then say, "*Amiik kelucallruaqa"* (I locked the door). That became our routine for the rest of the school year.

Eventually, he began to ask questions, instead of making statements. "*Camek tangssugcit* (What are you watching)?" "*Camek nerqatarcess'nuk* (What are we going to eat)?" Then a month later (November 16, 2008), he was able to say a two-sentence blurb: "*Ella pircingqatartuq* (The weather is about to have a blizzard). *Anuqenguq* (It's getting windy)." It sounded so natural.

Another evening, on October 3, 2008, my son came in and asked, "*Leo-mi qavartaryugngaunga* (Can I go sleep at Leo's)?" He was learning to differentiate post bases depending on context. Then he added, "*John-ami uitallrunga* (I was staying at John's)." Am I actually re-teaching him Yup'ik? Every time he talked to me in Yup'ik, I would be shocked at how much he knew after all.

There have been times when either my son or I traveled to other places. We have called the other on the telephone to let each know we had reached our destination. Since my effort, I use more Yup'ik when I'm on the phone with him, so he can continue to hear me use it. So towards nearing the end of my research, my son did me proud.

In mid-July, 2009 my son called me on his cell phone from Anchorage. He had just got there from Bethel. He said, "*Mom, Anchorage-amun tekitua* (I got to Anchorage)." Am I teaching him after all? He sounded so fluent! He was heading to Fairbanks to participate in University of Alaska Fairbank's summer program, Alaska Science Research Academy. I had begun to experience conflicting feelings about letting my son get involved in academic programs that are away from home. I want him to do well academically, but I was afraid it would negatively affect his re-learning Yup'ik.

Two nights later, he called again, after he had checked into Lathrop Hall, one of the dorms at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

"*Qayagaullruten-qa* (Did you call)?" he asked.

"I tried, but then I remembered you weren't supposed to get any calls after 10."

Right after I responded, I caught my breath! Oh no! I had just answered him in English! Realizing what I had just done, I asked him in Yup'ik, "*Nantellrusit* (Where were you)?" I don't think he noticed any change in my voice.

"*Ellametellruunga* (I was outside). *Unuaqu makciqua 7:00-ami* (I'll get up at seven in the morning."

He had initiated the usage of Yup'ik. He certainly had come a long way in a year. Because of my awareness, he had become aware too to relearn his Yup'ik. It is possible. There is hope. McCarty, Romero, and Zepeda (2006a) had interviewed a boy who emphasized that "'[e]lders say we're lost youth. *No.* We're only lost because [adults] won't take the time...to try to encourage us...There's always hope.'" (p. 42).

There were two occasions that highlighted my budding involvement in reinvigorating my son's Yup'ik. The first was on July 24, 2009, when he called me in the evening when he had the chance to do so. We chatted in Yup'ik about what he did during the day in his class. Before we hung up, he said without hesitation,

"My Yup'ik is improving. It feels good."

I agreed wholeheartedly. I knew my eyes sparkled, because I felt the happiness in my heart. Yes, it felt good.

Another time was on November 14, 2009. He had just come home from school and casually told me, "Oh, Mom, I took the YPT (Yup'ik Proficiency Test) today. I scored a 55 out 70. I am on Level 3. I did better than two years ago."

The researcher in me asked him, "Why do you think that is?"

"Because I've become aware."

As much difficulty as I had in getting my research started, I was extremely pleased with the progress I had with my child. Because I became aware my child became aware, too of *his* language use. If doing something like this has such a positive effect, imagine what it would be like for the community then: a domino effect that recreates a Yup'ik speaking community for all.

As I was trying to reinvigorate my child's Yup'ik, I encountered these critical incidents that I wouldn't have imagined occurring. Because of these, I have come to an understanding that language usage is more than just speaking it. Now that I've become aware how much is involved, I feel I can now truly work with my child's to strengthen his Yup'ik.

One significant lesson I learned was I kept treating Yup'ik as a school subject even as I was attempting to reteach it to my child at home. In Stevens (2003) story, he recounts of an interview by Mark Anthony Rolo of the *The Progressive* with Ojibwe author Louise Erdrich in which she stated, "If it's not taught in the home from the very beginning, is that a real language, or is that an academic exercise?" (p. 156). Hmmm.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

My research may be done and written on paper, but in reality, I am not finished with my effort to keep my language alive. This newfound responsibility weighs heavily on me, but I can no longer set it aside. It has become an on-going process for me as a parent, schoolteacher, and a community member. I watch and I listen and I learn.

An important lesson I learned was that my child still had his Yup'ik inside him. It became dormant, because it was not used much, if at all. My problem was I did not know how to tap into that. My advisor, Dr. Patrick Marlow, told me once that I shouldn't "underestimate what he knows." If your child has the background in your first language, it is there. The question is how to keep it going before it becomes extinct. Thus I spent this past year trying to find ways to reinvigorate my child's Yup'ik.

Because of him, I have learned more about myself as a Yup'ik, whose language and culture are united. I wanted that for my child. He still has his culture, but not so much the language. I couldn't believe how naïve I was about maintaining my first language. From my experience, simply becoming aware of the situation is the key to revitalizing Yup'ik, to finding the desire, and the purpose to keep it going. The next step is to involve the community somehow, to help them become aware like I did.

I have read so much material on second language acquisition, language loss and shift, language revitalization, language maintenance, and language death over the

last three years. With awareness, my emotions fluctuated from despair to hope, embarrassment to hope, helplessness to hope, regret to hope… but it has been largely remorseful… yet hopeful. This has been an emotional roller coaster ride!

Seven Myths

One of the books I read, How to Keep Your Language Alive (2002) by Leanne Hinton was enlightening. It was geared for those whose first language was nearly gone. Truthfully, this was the notion I had with my child, that he'd completely forgotten his Yup'ik. He has proven to me that I shouldn't have underestimated him. He is the one who has given me hope.

Hinton (2002) developed a one-on-one language learning model to reinvigorate the home language. Her approach involved a master and an apprentice. If I had used this approach, I would have been the master and my child would have been the apprentice. Even if this model was designed to teach non-speakers, I liked the method, because it was a straight-forward approach to teaching the home language. The first chapter was on seven language learning myths. These seven myths are what the school culture has established as truth, but in reality, they are detrimental to students whose first language is other than English. Frankly, I had mixed feelings about them. As a teacher of English, they didn't seem like myths at all. They seemed true! Yet the Yup'ik in me said otherwise. No wonder I continue to have internal conflicts over my roles as a teacher and a parent. Perhaps because of the conflict I experienced, they

helped me to learn about language maintenance, and about myself as a parent, teacher, and a community member.

Hinton (2002) goes into detail about the seven language myths. The first is: *You need a classroom, books, and a professionally trained teacher to learn a second language* (p. 1). My reaction? That was the way it was done in all my years as a student and a teacher! Having been unawares of this myth, I had created an obstacle for myself as I did my research. When I was trying to reinvigorate my child's Yup'ik at home, my role was too much that of a classroom teacher. It was the main role I had for so long. Yet I grew up speaking in Yup'ik. I did it without being in a classroom, without textbooks, without a certified teacher. So why was I having a hard time doing that with my own child?

Spolsky (1989, as cited in Norton, 2000, pp. 110-112) agrees with Hinton (2002). Natural language learning does not require a classroom. All it really requires is a language rich environment, in which the learner is able to hear and use the language for real communication.

Ironically, my son learned to speak Yup'ik in a classroom environment, because he was "around it every day, hearing it, learning to understand what [he heard], and speaking it" (Hinton, 2002, p.1). For my child, it was when he moved out of that setting, that his Yup'ik began to weaken. I didn't even think to continue to use it at home. Thus, for our children to continue our language, we need to provide an environment that would allow for them to continue using Yup'ik .

The second myth is: *It is best to learn language through writing* (Hinton, 2002, p. 1). That is so English schooling! That was what I have been doing all these years as a teacher of English for my students. The expectation that children learn writing even before they have a grasp of a second language seems backward to me now. No wonder they struggle to succeed in school. No wonder so many of our students become disenchanted with the current system in our school.

According to Hinton (2002), "If you want to learn to speak a language and understand others who are speaking it, you must learn it through speaking and hearing it, not through reading and writing it" (p. 1). Peregoy & Boyle (2005) reinforce this point. For them, oral language can be learned with little explicit instruction, and is the "primary vehicle for meeting our basic needs" (p. 6). Learning to write is secondary.

I learned Yup'ik from my parents. I heard it all my young life, and I have learned that even at my age, I still need to hear it. In my research, I was reminded on a daily basis how much I still needed to practice speaking Yup'ik. I have begun to lose some of my "linguistic identity, because I can no longer accurately label" (Marx, 2002, p. 4) what used to be familiar in a Yup'ik context.

I realize now my child wasn't hearing Yup'ik enough, so the result was that his pronunciations and phrasing were incorrect. Even if he could read in Yup'ik, he would just be sounding out many of the harder words and phrases without comprehension, just like kids who are just learning to read in English.

The third language learning myth is: *Grammar needs to be explained before you can learn the language* (Hinton, 2002, p. 2). Now this was how I've been

teaching, because I was taught this way when I was attending elementary school. There have been occasions when I felt uncomfortable teaching this way; I took this as failure on my part. Explain, explain, explain! I had tried to get better at this, but still, my students couldn't quite get the concepts. This myth helps explain why the majority of our students have difficulty passing the English combined skills test in their writing phases. Importantly, I understood as a Yup'ik that this was not the way to teach, after all.

Omaggio-Hadley (2001) explains how language use in context plays a role in acquiring a language. In traditional classroom learning, the specific material is presented in lecture form, whereas with meaningful learning, the students can identify and relate the lesson to their background knowledge (p. 68).

I remember when I took a semester of Yup'ik Orthography at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. I assumed that since I spoke Yup'ik, I would enjoy the class… instead, I had a negative reaction to it. I was so turned off by the lecturing style and nitty-gritty of Yup'ik grammar! This was not about spoken language at all, but about lecturing on specific rules of grammar and writing! Ugh!

I was extremely sensitive to my child's feelings about his limited Yup'ik, so imagine how my child would react if I were to approach relearning his Yup'ik this way.

Hinton's (2002) fourth myth is: *Translation is essential in order to teach someone a language.* (p. 3). Throughout the year of my research, this myth was my handicap. My son may have been relearning his Yup'ik, but not as fast as I expected. I

was so overly concerned with whether he understood me or not when I spoke Yup'ik to him that I kept translating what I said to him! In hindsight, it seems a bit like enabling behavior. In fact, this impeded the progress of his language learning. Repeatedly, I kept realizing how naïve I was! Having the misconception that my child had no Yup'ik at all didn't help either.

This notion can be connected to Krashen's (1985, as cited in Johnson, 2004, pp. 47-48) Input Hypothesis. According to Johnson's (2004) explanation, an individual acquiring a language comprehends the language by making a connection to the situation or context in which the language is used. An individual improves their language ability by always striving to stretch their current understanding (i) using the situation or context to understand more (+1). Together this is what Krashen calls "i+1" (1985, as cited in Johnson, 2004, p. 48).

Hinton (2002) suggests that we should avoid using English altogether. In fact, a classmate had the same suggestion to me-just use Yup'ik. I tried, but I struggled. It wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. There needed to more than just using Yup'ik. In fact, I wished I had remembered the author's statement: *The learner has to focus on understanding the meaning of the word-which helps in the learning process-and also hears the word many times* (Hinton, 2002, p. 3). In my research, I kept using repetition-which worked for my child. This brings to mind Barron-Hauwaert's (2004) point about the importance of using language consistently at home. She states that "consistent language use means a child can hear a good quantity of each language and she or he can bond with a parent through language" (p. 27).

The fifth myth is: *Adults can't learn languages.* Although my son was in his early teens, I assumed that he couldn't speak Yup'ik anymore, because I rarely heard him use it. Thus I assumed that I would have to start from scratch. Once I found he still has his Yup'ik in him, I became impatient with him at times for not relearning it as quick as possible. According to Hinton (2002), becoming impatient with a learner is the greatest obstacle to adult language learning (p.4).

I approached him in a gentle manner, so he couldn't be turned off by my impatience. Another one of Krashen's (1985, as cited in Omaggio-Hadley, 2001, p. 62) hypotheses, the Affective Filter, reinforces this notion. According to Omaggio-Hadley's (2001) explanation of the hypothesis, for my son to optimally acquire language, he should be: (1) motivated; (2) self-confident with good self-image; and (3) his anxiety level should be low (p. 62). During my research, this was what I encountered with my child. That's why Hinton (2002) says that "it is primarily an adult's inhibition and desire for perfection that make language learning seem so difficult" (p. 3).

The sixth myth: *You need money to do language teaching and learning* (Hinton, 2002, p. 4). According to the Hinton (2002), it just takes commitment, dedication, and desire to acquire a new language. She said it just take two devoted people, a master and an apprentice, to make learning occur. In that program, there is a stipend given to the master so he/she can make time to teach an apprentice. Then the apprentice can repay non-monetarily, like helping out with chores and such.

This myth supports the school culture. Non-residential non-native teachers have come and gone so much to our school that it is no wonder that our students haven't really learned the Standard English. There is too much teacher turnover, and some teachers get extra duty pay when they help with after school programs. As for me, I do what is expected anyway.

The final myth: *You need community support to learn your language* (Hinton, 2002, pp. 4-5). When I began my research, I was initially skeptical, because I was overly concerned some community members wouldn't accept my intention to reinvigorate Yup'ik with my child. I had the preconceived idea that eventually I would have to have the community's support. Since I started my research, that has not been the case. I realized I didn't need my community's permission to start.

My belief that I can't do it alone is real, but I had it all wrong. It wasn't that I needed my community's support to begin, but that I needed its help to extend and build on my own efforts to reinforce my son's language. The Eskimo dancing is an example of building a community to support his language. Many people are involved in this. The lyrics are sung in Yup'ik with hand movements that provide meanings for the words. Or it could a one-on-one situation with his grandma as she has a stake on him. She has been encouraging him to use Yup'ik, hence he talks more to her in Yup'ik than to me. He has a purpose for his language usage and that is to connect to her. Their relationship is special. In addition, some community members have begun to talk to him in Yup'ik since they've found out that he understands Yup'ik. This way, my child hears Yup'ik.

In fact, Hinton (2002) states "language revitalization can begin with a single individual's vision and commitment. You are likely to find that your example will interest other people, and your efforts may be the beginning of something bigger" (p. 5).

Advice for Mothers

Now that I have come full circle with my effort, I have some advice for mothers out there who have children who are learning English as their second language.

Foremost, if you use Yup'ik (or any indigenous language) with your children, continue to do so. Avoid ever showing any signs of devaluing our language. Or if your children experience shame from their peers for using Yup'ik, and say they don't want to anymore, encourage them to keep using it at home anyway. Since I have become aware, I admire you so. I have felt so regretful, but you won't if you keep your language alive.

And for those who want to begin strengthening Yup'ik with their children, like I am doing, be cautious. Because the use of our language has become such an emotionally charged issue in our schools, we need to be sensitive to our children about it. During my research, I became aware that I had to tread carefully about my son's speaking Yup'ik. Once I corrected him when he said a phrase "incorrectly", he became defensive and gave me an excuse that he was tired anyway. Because of this

experience, I continue to learn as a parent how to explore avenues for passing along my Yup'ik to him. I do not want him to be turned off with it.

One important lesson I am continuing to understand from my child and my students is this: they do want to speak Yup'ik. So the question is: Why aren't they? When I realized this, I could not believe that I have been so blind to this all these years. And I wonder why they don't use it much anymore. When I use Yup'ik at school, some of my students seem to realize that it's okay for them to use it too. I have heard them imitating their parents or other adults' Yup'ik. With my child, he hasn't heard me enough using Yup'ik. I struggle with this, but because of my awareness, he has become aware too.

My Action Plan

With the newfound background knowledge that I have gained during these last three years, I have formulated a personalized action plan to help me continue with my work in reinvigorating Yup'ik with my child. Not just in my home anymore, but outside of it-in the community.

The first is to strengthen the L1 community for him. I have learned that my home does not provide enough for him. In addition to that, I am working on *re*building *my* L1 community. This would mean attending more Eskimo dancing practices, or community potlucks, or any activities that occur in the village where community members congregate. These are social events. Or they could be simply encouraging my child to go subsistence hunting with a relative, in the hope that he would be

exposed to more language. Additionally, I plan to directly involve his two uncles that live in the village by asking them to speak Yup'ik whenever they talk to him. My hope is that the more he hears Yup'ik, the more he'll feel confident in using it more.

The second part of my action plan is to be aware of his emerging identity as a Yup'ik kid growing up in a Yup'ik community. This was brought to my attention when he was participating for the first time at Alaska Science Research Academy (ASRA) at UAF in July of 2008. One night, he called me. He told me dejectedly that he was being ignored by other kids and he made reference to being a "native" (Journal entry, July 19, 2008). I realized then he was identifying himself as an Alaska Native, as someone who does not belong to the majority (Caucasian) culture or group. I became aware then that I needed to actively nurture his Yup'ik identity, so he can have a healthy view of himself.

Just like in my research to reinvigorate his Yup'ik, I will have to find out on my own how to foster his Yup'ik identity, what I should do. Starting with language at least is a good starting point. As Guardada (2002, citing Norton, 2000) states,

> There is currently a belief that language, identity, and culture are inextricably related...and that language loss has a great influence on children's changing identities" (p. 344).

My work continues.

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